Postal facilities to book distributors

212. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that with the recent hike in postal rates, it has become prohibitive for book lovers in small towns and out-of-the-way villages to get books by posts;

(b) whether Government are thinking of ameliorating the conditions in the interest of book reading habit; and

(c) whether the postal facilities obtaining for newspapers can also be allowed to book distributors?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Postage in respect of book packets containing printed book has been revised after a gap of 10 years and the revision of registration fee for books valued below Rs. 50^- is after a gap of 14 years. These revisions will help to meet only partly the increased cost of providing these services. The price of books has been revised many times in recent past and the impact of revision of postal rates will be only marginal for book lovers.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) No, Sir.

Investment in telecom sector by private sector and M.N.C s'

213. PROF. M. M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of investment made in telecommunication sector by the private sector under the liberalisation policy during the Ninth Plan in the country;

(b) whether Private Sector and multinational telecommunication companies have shown interest to make investment for development of telecommunication facilities in the backward districts of the country; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) As per the information received from the private operators, the total investment in the major telecom service sector by private operators upto 31.3.2000 is approximately Rs. 16564.38 crores. Break-up is as under:—

Basic Services	— Rs. 3,605.48 Crores
Cellular Mobile Telecom Service	— Rs. 11,860.91 Crores
V-SAT	— Rs. 184.52 Crores
Mobile Radio Trunk Service	— Rs. 250.00 Crores
paging Service	— Rs. 663.47 Crores

The break up of private investment during the 9th five-year plan is not available.

(b) and (c) Indian companies with foreign partners had participated in the tender invited for providing Basic Telephone Service in the country. The company providing Basic Telephone service can have up to 49% Foreign direct investment. Licences have been granted to six such companies for providing Basic Telephone Service in the circles. Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra (including Mumbai), Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh & Gujarat. Further, as per NTP'99, Basic Telephone Service has been opened for free competition. The roll out obligation of the existing licenses of Basic Telephone Service includes coverage of rural and uneconomic areas.

Profit of VSNL

214. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the net profit of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) has shown an increase of 87 percent in the year 2000-2001;

(b) whether it is also a fact that during the period VSNL turnover has increased by 8 per cent only; and

(c) if so, what are the reasons for such an abnormal increase in the net profit of the company?